

MATURING POPULATION DATA QUALITY IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

NOTA: LA PRESENTACIÓN DEL DOCUMENTO COMPLETO SERÁ EN ESPAÑOL. POR AHORA HE TRABAJADO EN INGLÉS POR REQUERIMIENTOS DE LA REVISTA DONDE SERÁ PUBLICADO EL ARTÍCULO.

Timely data availability is important for the successful development of public policy. Increasingly, public and private institutions are aware that data accessibility enables them to identify priority target groups and surveillance activities, as well as allowing researchers to identify risk groups for further research. All democratic processes need access to data and information. In this regard, this paper aims to explore data access on the web sites of the National Statistical Offices (NSOs) in Latin America and the Caribbean countries. Based on an international quality framework for statistical activities, this paper points out the strengths and weaknesses of accessibility as one of the formal dimensions of data quality. The idea is to examine the access to micro and macro data, their periodicity, territorial level and the information systems that provide insight into the evolution and recent behavior of population. Twenty NSOs were included in the research. We highlight the data for social, economic and demographic research and the improvement of data measurement. The paper starts with a brief description of the international conceptual framework of data quality and ends with conclusions and a note about weaknesses in data access. The large differences between countries lie in: 1) the availability of the data series, and 2) the flexibility offered to the user to manipulate, manage and eventually access to digital information.

KEYWORDS: data accessibility, data quality, census, National Statistic Office, Latin America and Caribbean.

EXTENSIVE SUMMARY

Public and private sectors have become increasingly dependent on statistics and have encouraged the development of data sources for policy management. Timely data is of paramount significance for social, economic and environmental decision-making. The processes from data to information need to follow certain quality criteria. In this regard, international institutions, such as the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), International Monetary Fund (IMF) and Statistical Office of the European Communities (Eurostat) have been improving quality management since the mid-1980s.

The concept of data quality encompasses the processing, analysis, accuracy and all other characteristics of data quality or suitability of the use, including informing users of the methodology used in collection. Many statistical offices define data quality of a product by all characteristics that affect its ability to meet a specific need. In order to unify guidelines for quality assurance or assessing criteria, it identifies the following dimensions: relevance, reliability and objectivity, comparability, timeliness, understandability and accessibility. Quality is not limited to ensuring the accuracy and precision of the product; it must also consider aspects of user satisfaction. Thus, accessibility includes the variety of ways in which the user support services, the mass media, the cost of information for users and metadata are available. Accessibility as a criterion to evaluate data quality needs to be closely related with timeliness. Data produced must reflect the phenomenon they describe in a timely way. To summarize, data accessibility is the combination of availability and a minimum delay before publication.

Developing innovative techniques and technologies for data collection are linked to data quality. Population data accessibility has improved with technology. During the last decades, National Statistical Offices (NSOs) have taken a significant leap in digital and on-line publication of censuses and survey data. Also, Latin American NSOs have been improving data analysis and dissemination. Data accessibility implies examining a variety of access conditions, taking account of a user's needs. In this regard, the aim of this paper is to examine the guidance supporting micro and macro data; the territorial disaggregation level; access to data, such as printed or digital media; time period; and meaningful comparisons. It also refers to the availability of metadata, (i.e., explanations, concepts and methodology documents). **We place emphasis on data released in a suitable manner to inform the evolution and recent behavior of demographic variables. Twenty NSOs were involved in the research: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, México, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Dominican Republic, Uruguay and Venezuela.** The examination is only of NSOs' web pages; the traditional publication or CD-ROMs not listed on the web sites are not included into the present review.

We highlight the range of micro and macro data for social science research and the improvement of data measurement. Data accessibility enables the government to identify priority target groups and to monitor activities, as well as allowing researchers to categorize risk groups for further research. The idea is to explore whether tools designed to obtain data are useful to stakeholders. Showing the strengths and

weaknesses of accessibility is one of the formal dimensions of data quality. We believe that improving data access will engage stakeholders and link data to action. In short, what gives researchers the opportunity to provide insight into the evolution and recent behavior of population in Latin America. Section 2 is largely conceptual; they focus on the guidelines in data quality. The main idea is to review the definition and clarify the data quality requirements used in recent discussions. Section 3 shows improving data quality in Latin America and the Caribbean. Also identifies the current situation of demographic data accessibility in the region. Finally, Section 4 provides concluding remarks and a discussion on possible improvements to data accessibility in Latin America.